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BOOK REVIEWS

ANCIENT TALES AND FOLK-LORE OF JAPAN. By RICHARD GORDON SMITH. 361 pp. London, A. & C. Black, 1908.

Among the early English books on Japan which awoke the consciousness of the West to the existence of a remarkable people was Mitford's "Tales of Old Japan." Those factors in civilization which we have reckoned as among the highest — patriotism, heroism, devotion — were here revealed in a people which we had regarded as barbarous. Since the appearance of this book, hundreds, nay, thousands, of volumes have appeared, treating of every possible phase of Japanese life and history. Even the Yoshiwara has lately been dealt with in a monographic and sumptuous manner.

In the "Ancient Tales and Folk-Lore of Japan," Mr. Smith has given in an attractive way a large number of folk-lore tales, which have a peculiar vividness from the fact that in his extensive travels in Japan the author has gathered these stories from the lips of "the fisher, the farmer, the priest, the doctor, the children, and all others from whom there was a possibility of extracting information." He has pursued his quest in a true collector's spirit, and one can imagine his feelings of exultation in securing new forms of fairy and ghost stories. We are not surprised at this spirit when we learn that he collected and dredged in the Inland Sea for the British Museum, adding by his work many new forms to science. Animated by the collector's spirit, he has brought together a remarkable collection of ghost and love stories, which are presented in such a way that the reader realizes that he has literally been told them by the many persons he encountered in his travels. Through these stories one is brought to realize that high ethical principles are cultivated, virtue is rewarded, heroic deeds, self-sacrifice, and honor are adored, by the people. A Daimyo's treasurer, Fujisuna, in the thirteenth century, lost half a cent in crossing a bridge. The whole village was turned out to find it; and when found, Fujisuna, out of his own pocket, gave thirty dollars for a merrymaking, — a lesson in stern honesty that might impress some of our bank trustees. A man of high rank wishes to marry a fisher-girl, but she protests that one of so lowly an origin should wed one so far above her in the social scale. In the love stories human nature is shown to be the same the world over. In spite of the almost universal belief in ghosts by the people, certain ghost stories are explained in the discovery of a luminous fungus or noise made by rats. A carp gives a lesson in perseverance. Infidelity is regarded as the worst of sins. In "The Spirit of Yenoki" (p. 359) the behavior of wanton girls is rebuked, and virtue is inculcated.

The interest and beauty of these stories are enhanced by the fact that the common people tell them and remember them, and for centuries the memories of virtuous and heroic deeds are kept alive by decorating the tombs or praying and making offerings at the shrines of these noble spirits. There is nothing in our civilization paralleling the adoration the masses in Japan feel for the attributes of the great characters who form their history, and the marvel of it is that the country boy and fisherman have preserved and transmitted these stories from generation to generation. Fancy our surprise to have a wood-cutter tell us a long story of an event that happened in King Alfred's

time! and yet this is precisely what may be met with among the common people of that remarkable country.

The book is interesting throughout. Some of the stories are heartrending, others are delightful, but all breathe the Japanese spirit. The volume is illustrated by colored pictures, and many of these are as weird as the stories they portray.

Edward S. Morse.

EACHTRA AN MADRA MAOIL. EACHTRA MACAOIM-AN-IOLAIR. (The Story of the Crop-eared Dog. The Story of Eagle-Boy.) Two Irish Arthurian Romances, edited and translated by R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M. A., F. S. A., London, 1908. (Publications of the Irish Texts Society, vol. x.)

The two romances published in this, the latest volume issued by the Irish Texts Society, are taken from Egerton MS. 128, written in 1748, and now preserved in the British Museum. The editor, very properly disregarding the vagaries of the eighteenth century scribe, has conformed the spelling of his edition to the model of Father Dinneen's Dictionary, calling attention in footnotes or Appendix to numerous cases in which the original MS disagrees with the printed text. Words not found in Dinneen's Dictionary are given in the glossary. The English translation, which faces the Irish text of each page, though not absolutely literal, appears to be sufficiently close for ordinary purposes.

It is to be regretted that the editor did not indicate at least the more important variants in the character and arrangement of the incidents in MSS. other than Egerton 128, several of which are known to exist. Slight differences of this kind are sometimes highly illuminating to the student of folklore, to whom the volume will chiefly appeal.

The stories of the Crop-eared Dog and of Eagle Boy, in their present form, are conventional, long-winded accounts of other-world journeys, enchanted princes, and wicked magicians, intermingled with battles, sieges, and combats galore. Tales are interpolated within tales, and these again in the general thread of the narrative, so that the result is quite bewildering to the reader unacquainted with the methods of the Celtic story-teller. The frequent repetitions and the long strings of alliterative epithets — the latter nearly always an indication of decadence in Celtic romance — also detract considerably from the effectiveness of the stories for the English reader. And yet these fanciful Irish tales have a literary value of their own. In so far as they represent, even remotely, the unconscious art of the fireside narrator, they are worthy to rank as literature in a broader sense than mere conformity to artificial standards could make them.

Although the Egerton MS. is not earlier than the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the stories themselves doubtless belong originally to a much older period. Their immediate connection with the romances of the *matière de Bretagne* cannot with certainty be traced beyond three or four proper names, such as Arthur, Galahad, Lancelot, and Camelot, and perhaps a few stock situations such as that of the maiden held captive by giants and liberated by the hero. A number of motifs, though common to the Irish stories and to the French and English romances of Arthur, are more likely to be derived immediately from Irish tradition than from England or the Continent. For example, the tree and fountain on the Plain of Wonders, Gal-